



News Release



For Immediate Release

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Burning Ban Washed Up By Rainfall

County Fire Marshal Lifts Ban On Outdoor Fires

April 24, 2006 (Roanoke County) — Roanoke County's Fire Marshal, Gary Huffman, announced the lifting of a ban on outdoor fires in Roanoke County. The ban had been in effect since March 14, 2006 due to dry conditions in the Roanoke Valley. Significant changes in environmental conditions were the determining factor in lifting the ban.

Although the Roanoke County burn ban has been lifted, the statewide **4:00 P.M. Burning Law** continues to be in effect through April 30th. Briefly, the 4:00 p.m. Burning Law states: from February 15 through April 30 of each year, no burning before 4:00 p.m. is permitted, if the fire is in, or within 300 feet of, woodland, brushland or fields containing dry grass or other flammable material.

Citizens in Roanoke County are reminded that **all outdoor burning in the county requires a permit** from the Roanoke County Fire Marshal's office. There is no charge for this permit and anyone can apply for a permit by calling the Roanoke County Fire Marshal's office at 540-561-8119. Once you have completed and submitted an application to burn, a Fire Prevention officer will schedule a visit to your burn location for an inspection. If you meet the requirements listed in the application and no safety concerns exist, a permit may be issued.

Burning illegally is a Class 1 Misdemeanor, which is punishable by up to 1 year in jail and/or fines of up to \$2500. If citizens witness an outdoor fire, they should immediately contact 911.

Fire Officials warn that improperly disposing of smoking materials can cause a fire. All smoking materials should be disposed of in proper containers. Throwing cigarette butts out of a car window or down on the ground can likely cause a fire.

Additionally, improper ash disposal has become a common cause of many forest and brush fires. Wood ashes retain enough heat to ignite other combustible materials for several days. Virginia Department of Forestry and Roanoke County fire officials caution homeowners about this

serious threat to the safety of their families and homes. Improper ash disposals have already destroyed homes, outbuildings and valuable resources this fall. PLEASE BE CAREFUL!!!

What can you do to prevent forest and field fires from igniting from hot wood ash?

- Dispose of wood ashes in a metal container that can be tightly closed, douse with water, place the closed container outside your home away from combustible materials and leave in the container for several days before disposing of them. (Did you know that many people dispose of their wood stove ashes in garbage containers that are often plastic or even paper bags? It doesn't take much heat for these types of containers to burst into flames.)
- Teach other family members about the dangers associated with hot ash disposal
- Be careful with ashes around areas you might not consider as combustible during wetter times such as mulched flowerbeds and lawns that are drought stricken.
- DO NOT place hot ashes in a dumpster where there are certainly other combustible materials
- DO NOT dispose of ashes in a paper, plastic or cardboard containers
- DO NOT assume the ashes are cold and pour them onto the ground (even into a hole) where leaves can blow onto them or the wind can stir up sparks.

A cord of wood produces about 50 pounds of ashes, which can be used for many other purposes.

Once you are POSITIVE your container of ashes is "Cold", place in a pile and prepare your container for the next load.

Ashes from different types of wood vary slightly in their chemical composition, but all kinds of ashes can be used as fertilizer. They produce 50 to 70% lime and contain phosphorus, potash and trace elements. Gardeners can raise the soil's pH by applying wood ash to their soil. To avoid altering the pH too drastically, take a soil sample prior to the addition of wood ashes to your garden spot. If the soil pH value is below 5.8 and there is a lime recommendation on the soil test, then place a dusting of wood ash on the surface and work it into the soil.

Ashes may be used as a repellent. Sprinkle ashes beside row crops and on paths through the garden to discourage slugs and snails.

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